

News and Views

British Association Meetings

THE Blackpool meeting of the British Association closed on Wednesday, September 16, with the assembly of the general committee, when research committees were appointed and resolutions were passed gratefully acknowledging the obligations of the Association to the Mayor and Corporation for their hospitality and the ways in which they had contributed to the work and entertainment of the Association at Blackpool. The meeting has been notable in several aspects, and one which is unique of its kind was the opening of the famous autumn illuminations on Saturday, September 12, when Sir Josiah Stamp, president of the Association, switched on from a train the 300,000 coloured electric lights on pylons and archways which illuminated the whole length of the promenade. The day had been spent by a large party which travelled by special train to Furness Abbey, Windermere, Rydal Water and Grasmere; and upon the return journey the train was stopped at Oxenholme so that Sir Josiah could speak from his carriage to the people of Blackpool before he pressed the button which started the illumination of the five miles of the promenade. Sir Oliver Lodge, who was given an enthusiastic welcome at the opening meeting, when he expressed the thanks of the Association to Sir Josiah Stamp for his presidential address, attended a few other meetings before he left on Monday. His presence at Blackpool was much appreciated not only by his scientific friends but also by the people of Blackpool.

NEXT year's meeting is to be held at Nottingham under the presidency of Sir Edward Poulton. The general officers remain as this year; namely, general treasurer, Prof. P. G. H. Boswell, and general secretaries, Mr. F. T. Brooks and Prof. Allan Ferguson. The new members of Council are: Dr. F. W. Aston, Prof. F. Debenham, Prof. T. G. Hill, Mr. W. Campbell Smith, and Mr. J. S. Wilson. The meeting in 1938 will be held at Cambridge, on August 17-24. In January of the same year, it is proposed to send a limited party of the Association to India, when a joint session will be held with the Indian Science Congress, which will then be celebrating its silver jubilee. The 1939 meeting will be held in Dundee. The question of a meeting in Australia is still under consideration; but it will probably not be held there until 1942, as it has been found that 1940, originally suggested, is inappropriate on account of several important international congresses having been fixed for that year.

Sir Edward Poulton, F.R.S.

THE election of Sir Edward B. Poulton to be president of the British Association for 1937 will cause great satisfaction, and is particularly apt in connexion with the renewed interest in Darwinism,

and more especially in natural selection. This year's meeting has shown that there is a strong revival of belief in the efficacy of natural selection, and the presidential address to Section D (Zoology), and subsequent papers, demonstrated how much evidence is flowing along different lines to support the theory. The presentation to the world of Mendel's particulate theory of heredity in 1866 resulted in enthusiastic acceptance of the new doctrine and the belief that this process supplied the obvious means of evolution which would finally dispose of the less easily proved theory of natural selection. From this view, Sir Edward vigorously dissociated himself; but so prevailing was it that in the presidential address to the Association in 1913, Sir Oliver Lodge stated that not only was it not true that Nature does not make leaps, but that it was doubtful whether she ever does anything else. Now that the early conception of advance by large sudden changes has been so greatly fined down by the discovery of modifying factors, the two schools will be found to be less antagonistic. No one will rejoice in the reconciliation more than Sir Edward, himself eager to welcome and examine any new ideas on evolution, but always ready to hold the fort against new-comers with blaring trumpets acclaimed as the heralds of a new order.

SIR EDWARD POULTON is widely known for his exposition of the theory of natural selection as accounting for the colours of animals, particularly of insects; he has long been recognized as the chief authority on Darwinism in Great Britain. An Oxford man, having studied under Rolleston, he early distinguished himself as a morphologist; he was a vigorous supporter of Weismann's theory and took a practical part in making his views on the continuity of germ-plasm better known to the English-speaking public. But he became particularly interested in the problem of the colours of animals, and in his classical book, "The Colours of Animals", laid the foundations of his life's work. One general scheme was devised to cover all the manifestations of colour in animals, whether aggressive, protective, or for sexual attraction. The explanations by Bates and Muller of resemblances in colour between insects far removed in taxonomy found their keenest advocate in Poulton, who during forty years in the Hopeian chair of zoology at Oxford has been responsible for the accumulation of a mass of evidence for which no explanation has yet been put forward which covers so many points as does natural selection. Always ready to help in any work that would forward the study of evolution, he has consistently lectured and written as a supporter of Darwin's original views, as evidenced by his presidential addresses to the Linnean and Royal Entomological Societies, and to the zoological section of the British Association, which he has regularly attended since 1881.